



SEQUOIA & KINGS CANYON NATIONAL PARKS

SEQUOIA NATIONAL FOREST / GIANT SEQUOIA NATIONAL MONUMENT

SPRING THE SEQUOIA BARK 2006

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Winter's Changes

Winter seems a quiet time in the mountains. Under a blanket of snow, the world appears to lie still and unchanging. But this winter brought many changes to these parks. Over time, we will see which of the many types of changes that took place are important to the long-term protection and enjoyment of Sequoia and Kings Canyon. Here are a few of the shifts that took place:

TO SEE SHERMAN ~ Once the snow melts, final touches will be put on new trails to the General Sherman Tree. Access the main trail off the Wolverton Road between the Sherman Tree and Lodgepole. Just below the tree along the Generals Highway, handicapped-accessible parking, trails, and a new restroom have opened. Soon new trailside exhibits will add information to the spectacular views of sequoias.

WINDS OF CHANGE ~ Sometime during the wild storms of New Year's weekend, the second-largest branch on the Sherman Tree let go. The six-foot-diameter limb crushed newly built wooden fences below it, but offers a new, up-close perspective on the size of this tree. The huge branch sported a distinctive upward bend, making it easy to find on now-outdated photographs. Grab an old postcard and check it out.

The fire-hollowed Telescope Tree on the Congress Trail also gave in to the winds. Toppling is the most common cause of death of sequoias. We expect to find more sequoias down as snowmelt lets us wander into more remote areas.

BIG STUMP? ~ One tree that did *not* blow down is the large sequoia leaning over the Big Stump park entrance station on Highway 180. Last



What must be one of the world's largest branches has fallen off the world's largest tree. Walk to the General Sherman Tree to make your own size comparison! NPS Photo

fall, concern that the tree might collapse onto the station led the park to remove some large branches that were believed to be placing critical stress on the tree's hollow trunk. We also removed the old entrance station. A new station will be constructed once a safer, appropriate location is selected. In the mean time, please watch for signs telling you where to pay your entrance fee.

PICTURES AT AN EXHIBITION ~ After 40 years, the Grant Grove Visitor Center sports new exhibits and floor plans! Focusing on the three resources that make Kings Canyon National Park significant, the exhibits explore how the choice to preserve them has kept these fantastic features - and the experiences they offer - safe for us all. Stop to enjoy the new movie, murals, and sculpture!

IN THE DARK ~ At least 27 new species have been discovered in park caves, including dark-adapted spiders, millipedes, centipedes, pseudo-scorpions, and true bugs. All blind, they tend to have longer legs and other appendages than their relatives on the surface. Since they can't see their food, they evolved to reach out and find it. Because of their sensitivity to the a specific environment, they may be indicators of environmental changes.

UNDER NEW MANAGEMENT ~ Craig Axtell began his new assignment as park superintendent on January 17th. Most recently superintendent of Bryce Canyon National Park in Utah, he has also worked at Rocky Mountain, Everglades, and Isle Royale national parks during his 30-year tenure in the National Park Service. With degrees in forest science and resources management, he is active — and actively interested — in what goes on in the parks. Don't be surprised if you meet him out on the trails!